

Palmex and Environmental Responsibility



Although the synthetic roofing products from Palmex are not made of recycled plastics for reasons of durability and guarantee, it can indisputably be said that they are nevertheless the result of a recycling process.

Like all plastics and heavy components derived from crude (lubricants, tar, etc.) the styrene is a by-product extracted at the base of the refining column meant to extract lighter components such as fuels for vehicles and solvents for chemical industry. Since the main objective of refining crude is the production of fuels, the heaviest products are thus residues of such a production which found a useful end. The styrene and, by association, polystyrenes, are at the origin of most plastics since the principles of polymerization was discovered through their development. It goes without saying that it is not a new or exotic product; it is one of the 1st the plastics industry has produced.

Although the guarantee from Palmex is currently set at 20 years because it is still too early to determine the actual service life (the product has now been in production for over ten years), that useful service life is estimated to be at least 50 years. It is one of the sturdiest plastics on the market and one whose resistance to decomposition and deterioration is highly recognized. When done with it, one must recycle! Because of the imperatives of conservation and rationalization of our epoch, this highly reusable plastic is very appreciated by recyclers and it is obviously the avenue most indicated to dispose of the Palmex products.

There is however another side to the problem of determining a product's impact on the environment, namely the impact of using natural palms for roofing. Over a period of 50 years, with some luck, natural palms would have to be replaced approximately 10-15 times. For a roof of 200 m², we are talking of harvesting more than 2000 m². This not only damages hundreds of trees but if not done properly it often results in the death of those trees. While some argue that

Palmex Panama S.A.

trees are a renewable resources, their harvesting nevertheless is damaging to the environment as discovered by a recent [Finnish study](#):

The carbon storage of forests is, more than previously assumed, sensitive to climatic warming, and the carbon sink capacity of forests is endangered. To maintain the carbon storage, the accumulation of organic material in forests should increase. However, this is not compatible with the present bioenergy goals for forests and with the more and more intensive harvesting of biomass in forests.

What about the transportation of those natural palm leaves, which often have to come from far away like Chiriqui or even Nicaragua? Additionally, one would have to dispose of an equal quantity of used palms not mentioning rafters or other structural elements rotted by leaks or infested by insects, requiring transportation and burning. How many litres of chemicals (and plastic jugs, brushes, masks, man-hours, etc.) one will use to treat these palms, to waterproof them and to control the insects? How many roofs covered with natural palms have we not seen over the years using plastic sheets to try to prevent leaking? What happens thereafter to this plastic?

A further “green” benefits of the Palmex product is that it provides superb heat rejection and a natural ventilation between the rows of leaves, offering unsurpassed comfort in hot climates. Palmex can also be used on roofs that are designed to recover rain water - try that with natural palms!

Of course, the customers of “eco-lodge”, "eco-resorts" and "eco-developments" are very concerned by the environment and by conservation. However, these same customers are travelling from very distant countries by planes, buses, cars, etc., burning tons of fuel and thus producing more heavy residues usable for the production of plastics.

Today, whatever the product may be, everyone must deal with it in a responsible manner. We are convinced that the Palmex synthetic line of products is a responsible and respectful way of dealing with environmental concerns and this is part of why we consider it as a smart and green investment!

